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ALSACE - LORRAINE

The History of an Annexation

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BY Elsie AND Émile MASSON

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THE HISTORY OF AN ANNEXATION

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ALSACE-LORRAINE

The History of an Annexation⁽¹⁾

I

French Alsace.

Germany and the treaty of Westphalia.

In 1870, the war, undertaken by Napoleon III with such astounding thoughtlessness, was one long sequel of painful incidents. The ignorance and infatuation of the higher military commandement gave up everything to disorder and chance. Fate struck rapid blows: — bloody defeats in Alsace, retreat towards Châlons, march to the North, capitulation of Sedan, treason of Bazaine, and the capture of Strasbourg. In vain once the Republic was procla-

(1) GEORGES DELAHACHE: *Alsace-Lorraine. La Carte au liseré vert* (Paris, *Hachette*). — EDOUARD TEUTSCH: *Notes pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Annexion de l'Alsace-Lorraine* (Nancy, *Berger-Levrault*). — JEAN LONGUET: *Les Socialistes allemands contre la Guerre* (Paris, *Librairie socialiste*). — J. Novicow: *L'Alsace-Lorraine obstacle à l'expansion allemande* (Paris, *Félix-Alcan*). — IGNOTISSIMUS: *Une voix d'Alsace* (Paris, *Armand Colin*). — ERNEST RENAN: *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France* (Paris, *Lévy*). — TREITSCHKE: *Zehn Jahre deutscher Kämpfe* (Berlin, *G. Reimer*). — NORMAN ANGELL: *La Grande Illusion* (Paris, *Nelson*). — GASTON MOCH: *Alsace-Lorraine, réponse à un pamphlet allemand* (Paris, *Armand Colin*). — I owe my thanks to our colleague of the Central Committee, M. Emile Kahn, for all the documents he has procured for me, on the revolutionary doctrine.

med, the nation sought out in the history of the Revolution, some reason for not despairing, and stood firm against the enemy in a supreme effort; in vain, Paris, hunger-stricken and bombarded, supported a long, five months' siege; in vain Gambetta, with heroic improvisation raised up armies, which saved all that could be saved, — honour.

Mistress of the hour, Germany was not content with imposing on conquered France, the huge indemnity of five milliards of francs; they demanded France to maim herself, to make over the Lower and Higher Rhine, a greater part of the Moselle, a third of the Meurthe, and to give up thousands of her children, crying out dolefully at her desertion: The first article of the Treaty of Franckfort read: — « France gives up in favour of the German Empire », (the German Empire had just been solemnly reconstituted in the Palace of Versailles), — « all rights and titles to the territories situated at the East of the frontier hereafter named... The German empire will hold possession of these territories for ever, in full sovereignty and owner-ship ». — The contract was absurd. — mere appearance and show, since a contract presupposes the free consent of both parties, and one was signing, a knee on chest, a knife at throat. The formula was fallacious and lying and should be retranslated thus: « The German Empire will hold possession of these territories as long as it is strong enough to keep them and France weak enough to consent thereto ». Might does not constitute right: — might is but might, and the fact it imposed and upheld, falls and disappears with it.

Doubtless for many hundred years Alsace had belonged to the Holy Roman Empire and had been mingled more or less with its history. But the Roman Empire was not a modern state and still less a nation. It included principalities, bishoprics, electorates, free towns with their laws, customs and existence, only attached to it by a more or less ne-

minal bond of suzerainty. In 1648 at the signature of the treaties of Westphalia the Empire gave up Alsace to France, as a reward for the protection accorded by the king to the protestant princes of Germany. Such a transmission of suzerainty was then in nowise contrary to the law of nations. Peoples were not the own masters, and provinces, never dreaming of protesting, went from hand to hand, by contract, marriage, inheritance, ruse or violence. The wisdom of the royal government, respecting their tongue, traditions and religion soon made good and loyal subjects of the Alsations. The French Revolution crowned the work begun by the French kings: the suppression of privileges, feudal rights and all the complications and inequalities of the old order was welcomed enthusiastically. The Alsatian people, democratically minded, gave itself, on Federation day, heart and soul to France, binding itself by a formal expression of free will. The part Alsace took in the great epic poem of the French Revolution and the Empire, strengthened these feelings by the memory of mutual trials and mutual glories: it was at Strasbourg, at Dietrich's the mayor's, that Rouget de Lisle first sang the « Marseillaise », the national hymn of New France, and from its towns and villages came forth some of the most celebrated generals of heroic times: Kléber, Kellermann, Rapp, Lefebvre, Ney, Lassalle, Richepance. In this close and voluntary union, Alsace, through its sense of harmony and love of liberty, its wisdom and enterprising mind, social feeling and rare mixture of cleverness wit and depth — became an element necessary to the moral balance of France.

But Germany does not submit; it refuses to admit Germans can unite even freely with France. Every time any possible opportunity occurs, — in the terrible year of 1709, when Louis XIV was at bay, — during XVIII century, in 1792, when the Prussians cross the frontier, it tries to retract the concession

made by the Treaty of Westphalia, — not allowing the protestation and the right assumed over people speaking the same language to be set aside.

When the French Revolution put the nation in the place of the king, and made of it a union of free citizens, it awoke the consciousness and longing for independence: — a nation is not a thing to be handed over, sold or stolen; it is a moral being, having a right to respect. When Napoleon crushed down national feeling in his brutal desire of overlordship, he brought it to a pitch. He trampled Prussia underfoot, set up a garrison in Berlin, — remodelled as he would, the map of the German Federation, — cut out kingdoms in it and grouped them together according to his whim; raised up soldiers in it and sent them to die in Russia. This stern lesson revealed the cause of its weakness to Germany, — it lay in standoffishness and the rivalries and jealousies of little states. Henceforward Germany realises itself and wishes to be itself. Fichte, with splendid daring, in the very sound of Napoleon's drums, delivers his celebrated « Speech to the German Nation », in which, uplifting its courage, he inflamed its pride. « The German Nation » is henceforward a living active idea, — its unity is not accomplished, but it exists in the thought of learned men and philosophers, the will of patriots and the ambition of statesmen. In 1813, after the retreat of Russia, Germany rises up for the war of Independence. The French armies are not yet driven out, — they still occupy Hambourg, Lübeck, Dantzic, big German towns, when already eager, passionate voices ring out in denunciation of the Treaty of Westphalia, which recognises and sanctions the overlordship of France on German soil. In his pamphlet: « Der Rhein Deutschlands Strom, nicht Deutschlands Grenze » (« The Rhine, a river of Germany, not a frontier of Germany »), the poet, Moritz Arndt vehemently reclaims Alsace and exacts « the frontier

should stretch as far as echoes the German tongue ». Pamphlets, poetry, newspaper articles catch up the refrain, develop and enlarge it in a peculiar mixture of earnestness and pedantry. Princes, generals and ministers are all moved with the same passion. All expect from victory and diplomacy the realisation of their national hopes. The French Revolution had proclaimed the right of nations of disposing freely of themselves; already Germany opposes historical right, twisting and overthrowing the principle of nationalities, — and a policy of annexation, founded on philology and ethnography, in which science is only the hypocrisy of might. When Napoleon fell, the rivalries of the allied powers saved France, that, weakened and blood-drained after twenty years almost uninterrupted war, drew back to the frontiers of 1789.

Alsace remained French, without ceasing to be an object of competition and envy. The opposition between Austria and Prussia, the justified mistrust of the Southern States of the ambition of the Hohenzollerns, rendered theoretical the claims constantly being brought forward and expressed. The battle of Sadowa wipes out Austria, enlarges Prussia and gives it the upper hand in the northern Confederation. A war with France, crowned by the conquest of Alsace ought to cement the unity of Germany and assure the overlordship to the military faction which had led the country to victory and could alone assure the fruits of it. Hardly had Napoleon III fallen in the snare Bismarck stretched him, and long before any decisive event, the German intellectuals, Strauss, Mommsen and so on, like their fellows of 1813, in papers, pamphlets and open letters, lay down the problem of Alsace and demonstrate that this soil of the Empire ought to come back to Germany, whatever may be its will, by the simple reason that it belonged to Germany in the past.

II

The Right of Conquest and the Right of Nations.

1. THE GERMAN DOCTRINE : TREITSCHKE

In the « Preussische Jahrbücher », Treitschke, theorist of the state made divine, raised by its essence above morals and law, exposes the argument in favour of Germany. A Slav, Treitschke is neither speculative nor abstract. He is a man of action, a fighter, wielding his arguments like arms, seeing nothing in an objection but an obstacle, and his very style bearing the mark of imperious eloquence. He entitles his article: « Was fordern wir von Frankreich? » (« What are we to exact from France? ») and with a quiet conscience, while he is sharpening teeth and nails, takes for epigraph the following lines of Ulrich von Hutten: « Tell me, wolf, when wilt thou be glutted? Think'st thou not a day will come, hidden as yet, when thou must throw up thy prey? »

The thief has always pretty much the same arguments to bring against his victim. France is a threat and danger to Europe, by its spirit of disorder, political instability and revolutionary madness. Prussia alone rises up against the Napoleonic tradition, the policy of caprice and violence, and takes in hand the cause of nations, not courageous enough to enter in the battle: « the Germans, now, as fifty-seven years ago, are upheld by the feeling that they are called upon to fight for the freedom of the world. » The unruly nation whose ticklish vanity is always adding a faggot to everyone's fire, must be rendered powerless. « The anxious world already sees rising from the bloody seed of this war, a new harvest of wars. We owe to Europe a lasting assurance of peace between nations, and we can only give it, as far as human foresight goes, if German canons overlook the « stranger's land » from the fortified passes of

the Vosges; if our armies in a few marches can come down into the plains of Champagne; if the beast of prey has its teeth drawn, and if France, weakened, can no longer dare to attack us. Our people is peaceful; everything forbids us making an abuse of military force ». This apologist of Prussian militarism and Bismarck's policy did not foresee fifty years hence pangermanist madness would in the very same terms turn against Germany the accusations he was bringing against France.

Nevertheless he is obliged to confess the private interest, and the exclusively German interest, — all these fine sentences about the general interest of Europe hide. Germany wants to take an unfair advantage of victory, and dismember France by taking away Alsace-Lorraine. Why and in what right? The most loyal course would be to fall back on the law on the wolf, which has not had enough to eat and is running the risk of over-eating afterwards. Treitschke can not accept that, and to justify his theft pretexts brings forward arguments which, by logical necessity we shall find on the pen of all those who endeavour to justify the same crime. The thief does not steal, — he only lays hands on what he considers a necessity. A people has « the right to take the guarantees necessary for its safety ». If Strasbourg belongs to France, the way is open to invasion, — it is a continual threat. Every summer French pontoons practise throwing pontoons over the Rhine; « such a frontier in a shame for a high-spirited people. » The history of the past, the repeated incursions of the enemy, the ravages of which the beautiful Rhine country still bear traces, all point out the necessity and obligation of screening Germany from the danger pendent over it and of assuring peace with dignity by a readjustment of frontiers.

Therefore the annexation of Alsace is not a conquest, — it is a recovery, — the recovery by the

Germans of what had never ceased to be their dowry, and which, two hundred years ago, — a mere day in the history of a nation, — had been snatched from them by force and treachery. Treitschke has not got the pangermanist rage: — he recognises it would be somewhat imprudent and unjust to lay claim on really French lands, such as Burgundy, the Valley of the Rhône or even Flanders, and that « it would be as ridiculous to claim Lyon and Arles. under pretext the imperial Eagle had waved over them in old times, as to claim the ancient right of suzerainty over Italy. » Besides « in no country of Europe does the political frontier exactly correspond to the linguistic one. » Germany, as well as the really German countries of France, must exact what is indispensable to their security, — the two fortified towns which are their bastion and bulwark: Metz, protecting the course of the Moselle, and Belfort, commanding the opening between the Jura and the Vosges.

The right of Germany is founded on nature and history: — ethnography, linguistics, the characteristics of the race, its structure, temperament and dialect, all attest, what no one denies, that the population of Alsace is one branch of the great German stock: — for ten centuries Alsace was closely blended with the artistic, moral and religious life of Germany; it has the same traditions and legends; during the Middle-Ages it gave Germany poets, singers, painters whom Germany counts an honour: — Gottfried of Strasbourg, — Martin Schöngauer of Colmar; during the Renaissance, learned men and humanists; during the great struggle of the Reformation, preachers and martyrs. Even today in the customs, manners, national festivals, in Christmas trees, those impressions of early childhood and youth survive, which two centuries of French rule have been unable to wipe out. « The right of nations knows no prescription. »

✱ For all theorists of Germanic conquest, the right

X of nations is not the right of each nation of disposing of itself: — it is the right of the strongest to absorb in its political and territorial unity all the small nations, speaking the same language and belonging to the same ethnical group. In his letter to Mommsen, Fustel de Coulanges pointed out this misinterpretation: « You invoke the principle of nationality, but you understand it otherwise than all Europe. According to you, this principle authorises a powerful State to seize on a province by force, with the only condition of asserting the province is inhabited by the same race as that state. According to Europe and common sense, it simply authorises a province or a population not to obey a foreign master against their will. I will take an example to explain my meaning: — the principle of nationality did not allow Piedmont to conquer Milan and Venice by force, but it allowed Milan and Venice to free themselves from Austria and join freely to Piedmont. You see the difference. This principle can give Alsace a right, but it gives you no right on Alsace. It establishes a right for the weak, — it is not a pretext for the ambitious. The principle of nationality is not the old right of the strongest, under a new name. »

The Alsatians wish to remain French; their will, declared, known and uncontested puts a stop to discussion and closes the debate. To this common, plain, clear notion of the right of nations, Treitschke opposes a strange nationalistic mysticism, justifying theft by the special decree of that Providence who rendered it possible. God exempts his elect and his priests from plain, human morality. « Face to face with the duty that falls upon us of assuring the peace of the world, who can oppose to us that the Alsatian-Lorrains will not belong to us? before the holy necessity of these great days, the doctrine, — plausible formula of *demagogues without a country*, — that nations have the right of disposing of themselves, — falls through lamentably. These countries belong to

us by the right of the sword and we have the pretension of disposing of them in virtue of a higher law, — the law of the German nation, which cannot allow children it has lost to remain for ever strangers to the German Empire. » After a moment's surprise, the Alsatians will bless the day which made them come home to the great family from which they were brutally torn away in old times. « We know what is proper for the poor things better than they do themselves; we wish, even against their will to give them back their real « self » (*ihr eigenes selbst*). » In exchange of French civilisation, with its flimsiness, its superficial taste and its spirit of vaudeville, Germany offers Alsace the earnestness and depth of a culture, which alone can satisfy the needs and aspirations of a Germanic race.

Thus, according to the German argument, a nation is not its own property; it belongs to the State which claims the ownership of it with a sufficient number of soldiers and cannons and which brings forward titles founded on dubious sciences: — ethnography, philology, history, which everybody can twist and turn to their interests and passions. A quarrelsome, uncertain neighbour; — frontiers open to invasion, the origin of geographical names, the mensuration of skulls, a treaty signed 800 years ago between barbarian chiefs, — nature and history are invoked to create a right which is the negation of right. All those who, in order to disguise injustice and cover violence with a hypocritical mask, bring forward their own superiority which they alone do not doubt, or bring forward what once may have been and is no longer, a common existence more or less long in the past, forgotten memories, worn-out sympathies, abolished influences, — are the disciples of Treitschke, Strauss and Mommsen: perhaps they speak in French, but they think in German.

2. THE FRENCH DOCTRINE AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

The French way of thinking is in opposition to the German: — it is the antithesis of it. Historical, philological, ethnographical law, confused and contradictory, offering arguments to everyone's cause, authorising the meanest quarrels, only expresses the conflict of interests and passions which it notes without settling. France upholds that justice should regulate the relations of nations as it does individuals, and that lasting peace is only possible between them by the mutual respect of their liberty. Brutal annexation transgresses against a nation in the same right that slavery transgresses against an individual person: — the right of being one's own master, of not being treated like a thing, a simple instrument of the will and passion or another. This judicial theory, prepared by the philosophers of XVIII century, becomes precise, takes form and enters into the conscience of the nation and political reality at the French Revolution. Interpreting this new thought Mirabeau proudly proclaims at the Constituante « right to be sovereign of the world. »

The French nation had built itself up during its long history, by the wise and continuous efforts of the best of its kings. In 1789, it remade itself, by an act of its own will. July 14th 1790, anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, the day of the great Festival of the Federation, all the provinces, by their delegates, gave up their customs and privileges, — everything making them separate and different, and swore by oath henceforward they would be ruled by the same laws and submit to the same Constitution. France is not merely a grouping of districts, finding their unity in the royal power; it is the same heart, the same thought, a living being, a moral personality. The Fatherland is no longer an historical accident, given up to the chance of dynastic rivalry, — it is the inner consciousness of the citizen, a com

mon will, a covenant to which all have freely consented. In « The Address of the Parisians to all the French », preamble to the plan of Federation, adopted by the Assemblée Constituante, the Free Borough of Paris called upon all the citizens to unite together by a holy tie, « by a solemn oath on the altar of the Fatherland. » « Dearly beloved friends, never have more pressing circumstances invited all Frenchmen to unite in one same mind, to rally courageously round the law, and uphold with all their strength the establishment of the Constitution. « We are neither Bretons nor Angevins; » our brothers of Brittany and Anjou have said to us : « We are no longer Parisians, we are all French. We have sworn to be united by the eternal tie of holy brotherhood. » Faithful to its spirit of universality, France holds out to all nations the new right established for itself. A nation is not a thing, anyone's property, — it is a collective conscience, in which thousands and thousands of individual consciences unite and recognise each other; it is a moral personality, bearing in itself, multiplied and magnified, the dignity of the human being. The nation alone is sovereign, — its own master, — and alone able of deciding of its destiny. There is no justice against justice, — no right against right, and there is something absurd and contradictory in the right of might, the right of conquest.

Even before the Republic was founded, in an article of the Constitution of 1791: — (Article VI) « The French nation declares it gives up undertaking any war, with the object of conquest and will never employ its forces against the freedom of any other nation. » The project of Girondin Constitution, laid before the Convention by Condorcet in the sitting of Feb. 15th 1793, only has the value of a statement of principles. Before the project had been exposed to the Assemblée, its principal authors, Brissot, Pétion, Gensonné, Vergniaud were doomed and their

heads had fallen on the scaffold. But we find in it a still clearer expression of the new law: — « Title XIII. Article I. The French Republic only takes up arms to uphold its liberty, the preservation of its territory and the defence of its allies. It solemnly gives up uniting to its territories, foreign countries, except after the wish freely uttered by the majority of their inhabitants, and only if the said countries are not incorporated and united to another nation, in virtue of a social covenant, expressed in an earlier Constitution, and to which they had freely consented. » When the Montagnard Constitution is voted, June 24th 1793, France, threatened by a powerful coalition, is invaded on five sides at once; the Convention, never mentioning the right of conquest, limits itself to affirming its resolution of victory: « The French people cannot make peace with an enemy occupying its territory. »

These new ideas do not remain dead letter, they are the very ideas the revolutionary assemblies, from the Constituante to the Convention, put to practice in their intercourse with foreign powers. In his statement of Oct. 28th 1790, about the affair of the « titled princes » of Alsace, Merlin de Douai declares: — « The Alsatian people joined itself to the French nation because it freely desired to do so; it is therefore their will and not the Treaty of Münster which completed and legitimised the union. » In 1792, Savoy, in an irresistible impulse, offers and gives itself to France, begging to share the same liberties. City and rural dwellers flock before the armies. The town council of Chambéry goes out of the town, and a great crowd, cocards on their caps, follows, and singing the Marseillaise, mingles with the soldiers. The syndic cries out, interpreting everyone's thought: « We are not a conquered people, — we are free. » Oct. 14th the Savoyards, called together in assemblies of the first degree, elect members; Oct. 21st the National Assembly, sitting at Chambéry, transmits the

terms of the people's will to the Convention. « The Savoy nation, after having proclaimed the deposition of Victor Amédée and his posterity, declares itself free and sovereign, » — and it is as free and sovereign that by its elected members it expresses « the unanimous desire of being united to the French Republic, not by a mere alliance, but by an eternal union, making it an integral portion of the French Empire... Legislators, it is not an association of slaves, trembling at the fetters they have just thrown off, and begging you to take them under your protection: — it is a sovereign, admiring your glory and begging you to allow some of its rays to be reflected back on him. » Nov. 27th 1892 the Convention, after having heard the statement of the abbé Grégoire, ratifies the annexation, insisting on the principles rendering it legitimate. « The Convention after having taken note of the free and general desire of the sovereign people of Savoy, exposed in the Assemblies of the Commons, to become embodied in the French Republic, — taking into consideration that nature, affinity and mutual interests render this union advantageous to both nations, declares it accepts the proposed union and from henceforward Savoy is a integral part of the French Republic. »

Feb. 14th 1793, a statement made by Carnot on the union of the Principality of Monaco, affirms once more the right of nations of freely disposing of themselves. « The unchanging right of every nation is to live apart, if it pleases, or to unite to others, if they desire it, for common good. As we, Frenchmen, do not recognise any other sovereign than the nations themselves our system is not over-rule but brotherhood. Our principle is that every nation, however small its country may be, is its own absolute master, — its rights are equal to the most powerful and no one can lawfully attack its independence, unless their own independence be evidently compromised. »

3. ANNEXATION AND PLEBISCITE

Napoleon I came back to the old right of might; he uses and abuses it; during fifteen years, in a wild dream of overlordship, he turns Europe upside down, — cuts out principalities and kingdoms according to his whims, — and only succeeds in bringing Cossacks and Prussians twice to Paris and in leaving France at last, blood-drained, worn-out and diminished. But the doctrine of the French Revolution is not abolished; it has never ceased being the doctrine of French democracy. The Article V of the preamble of the Constitution of 1848, takes up in the same terms, the expression of the Constituante: « The French Republic respects foreign nationalities, as it means to make its own respected, — undertakes no war with the object of conquest, and never uses its armies against the freedom of another nation. » In 1849, when the President, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte intervenes in Italy on behalf of the Pope against the Roman Republic, it is on account of this Article V that Ledru-Rollin and his friends demand the impeachment of the President and bring about the events of June 13th. — During XIX century, under the action of the revolutionary ideas, oppressed nations awake, claim their independence and conquer it, — Italy from Austria, Greece, Roumania, Bulgaria from Turkey. The new law, giving justice a place in international relations, has a tendency to become, by tacite consent, the law of civilised nations, at least in their mutual intercourse. An annexation only seems legitimate when it is confirmed by a plebiscite. Under the Second Empire, Nice and Savoy are called upon to ratify by vote, the treaty giving them up to France. However clear and manifest was the will of the Italian nation of uniting its scattered members and achieving its unity, the new law wishes it to be positively expressed, and it is by a series of plebiscites that Lombardy (1859), Tuscany, Modena,

Parma, Romagna (March 1860), Umbria, the kingdom of Naples and Sicily (Oct. 1860), Venetia (1866) and Rome (Oct. 2nd 1870), are annexed first to the kingdom of Sardinia, then to that of Italy.

Reactionary powers maintained no less obstinately the old doctrine of the supreme power of the prince, holding his people as private property, to be transferred, given up or sold. July 11th 1859, prince Napoleon had an interview with the Emperor of Austria, Francis-Joseph, to settle the conditions of peace. The French project bore these words: « The Emperor of Austria gives up his rights on Lombardy to the Emperor of the French, who, according to the desire of its inhabitants, hands them over to the King of Sardinia. » Francis-Joseph protested: « What you call the desire of its inhabitants, I call revolutionary law, which I can not admit. I only recognise the law written down in treaties. According to those treaties, I possess Lombardy. I agree, when fate has decided by the sword, to give up my rights to the Emperor Napoleon, but I cannot recognise the right of inhabitants or anything similar. » The despotic principle is thus clearly opposed to the liberal and judicial one, according to which a nation alone can be its own master (1).

A clause inserted in the Treaty of Prague (1866) at the request of Napoleon III, maintained that the Danish population of Sleswig should be retroceded to Denmark, if, by their vote, they expressed the desire of being given back to their home-country. The Prussian government only signed this engagement with the resolution of never keeping it. Prussia does not recognise the right of nations, only the right of might. War is a duel between states, — victory is a judgement beyond recall, — the judgement of God. God's mission is to distribute justice,

(1) *Revue des Deux-Mondes*: 1^{er} Août 1909, quoted by Novicow: *L'Alsace-Lorraine*, p. 48.

and as He has established a law of silence for Himself, He incurs the responsibility of all the crimes committed in His name. It is by this mysticism of a hired mercenary that William I justified the annexations of Sleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel and Francfort, after Sadowa: « The governments of these states have called upon themselves the decision of war. This decision, by God's decree, has turned against them. » Leaving God to His own affairs, Bismarck invoked more loyalty the reason of State, the right of the strongest. As they objected to him in the Reichstag that « to-day plain might is not sufficient for founding law and state », he replied: — « Our right is the right of the German nation of existing, breathing, uniting; it is the right and duty of Prussia to give the German nation the basis necessary to its existence. »

III

The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine.

1. THE PRELIMINARIES OF PEACE (FEB. 1871) AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BORDEAUX. — THE PROTESTATION OF THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OF ALSACE-LORRAINE AND OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

There is therefore an opposition of principles and doctrines between France and Prussia. « Up to now », wrote a clergyman (of the peace-party!) « there is no common ground on which we and the French can meet. The French have an abstract conception of right, and we have a materialistic one. It is in the essence of the French mind to always lay stress on the right of nations of disposing of their own destiny. The German idea of right is different. Germans are guided by their sense of history and cannot neglect the decision of history. »

Prussia has always fought for itself and for selfish ends; « it has made a national industry of war », stolen Sillesia; jobbed up the division of Poland, annexed Sleswig, and Alsace-Lorraine without ever gaining the hearts of those it coerced. The mistake of certain Frenchmen, whose pretention it is to teach us true patriotism, following the Prussian school and offering us its crimes as examples, cannot change the past, French tradition, duties assumed before the world and the ideas it represents. Without any immediate interest, just for justice, French blood flowed on the battle-fields of the wars for freedom; powerless to help Poland, France freed the United States, Greece, Belgium and Italy, mingling its memories with their dearest and most glorious ones.

In March 1871, when the Germans, victorious, requested the French to give up Alsace-Lorraine to them, they not only lessened them materially but morally. It was asking them to transgress the covenant of the Federation of 1790, which had sealed French unity, to give the lie to their principles and disown their democratic faith by a sacrilegious act.

« It is difficult », wrote Ernest Lavisse, « for a foreigner to understand why the French can not resign themselves to the loss of their provinces: « it is the law of war », say the Germans. This way of speaking would have astonished no one during the last century, and even today it seems natural to the political men of the old order. But France, in our century, represents a new policy.

The French nation, of all nations of the world, is rationalistic and sensitive. The French uphold that it is not permissible to treat a population of human beings like a drove of cattle. They believe in the existence of the soul of a nation. They pitifully took compassion on the sufferings of the victims of might. They wept over Athens, Warsaw and Venice, and they did not only give tears to the « downtrodden ». The peace of Francfort did not only leave us the humiliation of defeat. It did not only split open our frontier and put our country in an intolerable state of danger. By taking from us hearts that were and wished to be ours, the conqueror has wounded us in our creed... He has simply taken advantage of the old right of might. This is what characterises the question

of Alsace. It puts two epochs of civilisation in opposition, and in our defeat, we have a peculiar honour: if we right the wrong that has been done to us, it will be a satisfaction given to reason and to the most generous feelings of our era (1).

The Assembly elected in the early days of Feb. 1871, wished to conclude peace, and, having got rid of that preoccupation, work at the restoration of the monarchy. It hated, in that desperate war, the grand memories of the French Revolution. Three departments had elected Garibaldi and it refused to receive in its body the hero of the Italian independence, who had come to fight for forsaken, conquered France. Victor Hugo, prevented from speaking and hooted down was obliged to resign during a sitting. Gambetta who for five months, had been the soul of the country, had kept up the struggle and saved honour, was denounced as a « dangerous lunatic ». Certainly it was very difficult, after the capitulation of Paris, to continue the hostilities, and the country weary and worn-out had declared itself for peace, but the Assembly in its impatience to get rid, both of the war and the Republic, committed the fault of showing, that having never taken into consideration the contingency of resistance, it was ready to yield everything.

Feb. 12th the National Assembly met at Bordeaux; Feb. 17th a deputy of the Upper Rhine, Keller, in the name of his colleagues, lay before it a declaration drawn up by Gambetta and signed by all the members for Alsace and Lorraine:

Alsace and Lorraine will not be transferred... All of one mind, the citizens who have stayed in their homes, and the soldiers who have hastened under the flag, by voting or by fighting, signify to Germany and the universe, the inchanging desire of Alsace and of Lorraine to remain French soil. France cannot consent to and sign the sur-

(1) ERNEST LAVISSE: *Vue générale sur l'Histoire politique de l'Europe*, p. 215, quoted by G. Delahache: *Alsace-Lorraine*, p. 220.

render of Lorraine or of Alsace... An Assembly even issued out of universal suffrage cannot invoke its sovereign power to conceal or ratify exactions which destroy national integrity: it would be laying claim to a right which does not even belong to the people called together in its meetings. Such an excess of power, the effect of which would be to mutilate the mother of us all, would give up to the justly severe judgement of history, all those guilty of it. France may endure the blows of might, but not sanction its sentences. Europe can neither allow nor ratify the relinquishment of Alsace and Lorraine. The civilised nations, guardians of the rules of justice and the law of peoples, can no longer remain insensible to their neighbour's fate, under pain of becoming, in their turn, victims of the outrages they have tolerated. Modern Europe cannot allow a people to be seized upon like a mean herd... it is necessary to its own preservation to forbid such abuse of force... In faith of which, we take our co-citizens of France, the governments and people of the whole world to witness that we consider beforehand as null and void, any act, treaties, votes or plebiscite, consenting to give up, on behalf of a foreigner, the whole or any part of our provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. We proclaim by the present declaration, the right of the Alsatians and the Lorrains of remaining members of the French nation, to be for ever inviolable, and we swear, as for us and our constituents, our children and their descendans, to claim it without end, by all means and from every usurper.

To this declaration was joined the following proposition: « The National Assembly takes into consideration the unanimous declaration of the deputies of the Lower-Rhine, Upper-Rhine, Moselle, Meurthe and Vosges ». The proposition was useless and dangerous; to discuss it, meant foreseeing and admitting the annexation; to vote it, meant giving up the peace they had decided to conclude; to throw it out, meant confessing that the sacrifice of the two provinces had been agreed upon beforehand.

Uneasy at the emotion which had laid hold on the Assembly and impatient to have done with it, Thiers, lowering the tone to which language and feelings were threatening to rise, called upon the Assembly to be logical with itself: « Have the courage of your opinion: it is either war or peace. *This is all very*

serious. It is no playing matter when it is question of the fate of two very interesting provinces or of the whole country. I must ask you to be quick about it (1). » These common work making a laughing-stock of generosity, brought back the majority to their true level. A commission nominated by the committees, examined the proposition without delay and, the same day, after Beulé's declaration, the following resolution was adopted in public sitting: « The National Assembly, whilst it welcomes with the deepest sympathy the declaration of M. Keller and his colleagues, concerning Alsace and Lorraine, commits itself to the wisdom and patriotism of the negotiators. » As Rochefort said « it was a blank signature ». Bismarck knew he could dare all he liked, without running the risk of a revolt of conscience which would have brought everything up again.

The most illustrious members of the republican party, and among whom were Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, Edgar Quinet, V. Schœlcher, Benoit Malon, Ranc et Clemenceau, siding with the deputies of Alsace-Lorraine, sent an address to their colleagues on Feb. 18th: « We desire to inform you that the representatives of republican France, share your feelings and opinion... We declare that we, the National Assembly and all the French nation are without the right of making a single one of your constituents subject of the Prussian king; like you we consider null and void, any act, treaty, vote or plebiscite, by which any fraction of Alsace and Lorraine should be given up. »

2. THE DEBATE ON RATIFICATION (MARCH 1ST 1871)

The negotiations were finished in a few days; on 26th the preliminaries of peace were signed at Versailles; on 28th Thiers had come back from Bor-

(1) Edouard Teutsch, p. 13.

deaux, and on March 1st at half past twelve, the sitting which ratified the conditions of peace opened. The Lower and Higher Rhine, the greater part of the departments of the Moselle and the Meurthe, two districts of the Department of the Vosges were cut away from France and became German soil.

Louis Blanc, the historian of the Revolution, called up the memory of that great epoch, the victories and salvation of the country against all hope; he begged the Republic to be faithful to its tradition and to gather together all the forces of the nation for a final struggle; he entreated the Assembly not to accomplish an act that exceeded its powers : « tearing away from Frenchmen the quality of French. » Victor Hugo spoke rather as a seer than as a political man: behind today's defeat he sees tomorrow's victory, he sees France « springing up one awful day and snatching back Lorraine, Alsace. Is that all? No. No! Snatching back, hark ye, Trèves, Mayence, Cologne, Coblenz, — all the left bank of the Rhine », — to keep it? No, to give it back to Germany in exchange of brotherly peace. Tachard, the deputy of the Upper-Rhine, protested in a very dignified way, at the names of Mayence and Coblenz. « These two names are lost for us; it is for them we endure the sad fate awaiting us... We are French, gentlemen, and for us there is only one country, France, without which we cannot exist. But because we are French, we are just, and do not wish to do unto others what we should not wish others to do to us. » Other orateurs spoke in turn according to one side or the other; Buffet and Changarnier for peace. Vacherot, the philosopher, whose thought was daring and whose temper mild, came forward to reassert principles, simply to better show the necessity of sacrificing them.

In a splendid speech, Edgar Quinet placed the Assembly before the work it was asked to accomplish, — pointed out how contradictory, immoral

and truly monstrous was a covenant, entangling two incompatible rights, sanctioning the right of conquest in the name of the right of nations, which is the denial of it. « Up to now conquerors were content with laying hands on a territory and seizing it by force. They kept it if they could. It was the right of war. To day the Prussian pretensions are quite different; they mean to have their theft voted, consecrated by the universal suffrage... It is in this that the hidden thought of the new powers is manifested; they know that everything not founded on the new principles brought in by France, is decrepit. The enemy's design is to make use of the National Parliament for dismembering the nation. The feudal spirit would thus take vengeance on our democratic institutions by making them the instrument of our ruin. The idea of Prussia is this: — Compel the French nation to cripple itself, — make France a tributary nation of five milliards of beings, — like the enthralled nations of antiquity: — this is the new German law in which feudal hatred and race hatred are mingled (1). »

Finally, Thiers pointed out that France was worn-out and disorganised, the nation incapable of a fresh effort, the continuation of the struggle useless, peace longed-for and necessary, and the Assembly, by 546 voices against 107, voted the ratification of the preliminaries of peace. The opponents belonged to the republican party, which objected to the fiction of a covenant destined to give an appearance of justice to an abuse of strength.

After the vote, Grosjean, deputy of the Upper-Rhine, declared a second time, in the name of his colleagues and constituents, that the transfer of the provinces, by a so-called consent, really torn from them by violence, could never take a judicial character, by any sophism or by any subterfuge. « ...We

(1) Quoted by Georges Delahache, p. 77.

declare once more as null and void a covenant disposing of us without our consent. The claiming of our rights will forever remain open to each and all of us, in the form and measure our consciences dictate it to us... Our prayers will follow you, and we shall await, with perfect confidence in the future, for the French nation, new-born, to carry on the current of its great destiny. Your brothers of Alsace and Lorraine, now cut-off from the common family, will keep a childlike love for France, absent from their homes, until the day comes when she will take her place there again. »

3. THE FRENCH « DOGMA »

All was finished. The French had owned the right of conquest and countersigned their own crippling. They had set about war without preparation, in shocking conditions; the country was conquered, disorganised; they might give way before force and give up what they could no longer defend, but could the Assembly in the very name of the right of nations of disposing of themselves, give up to the enemy two provinces which did not desire it, and which protested against such violence? The vote of the Assembly gave a sort of legal consecration to the act of an outlaw.

The French nation was not only hurt in its material interests, its political and military greatness, it felt hurt in its moral life, in its religion of right. It did not invoke this right by hypocritical cowardice, to hide its weakness and powerlessness, with the afterthought of transgressing it cynically, when no longer reduced to invoking it. Under the scourge of fate, taking thought with itself, looking back on the mistakes it had made, it took clearly and sadly conscience of the principles its great revolutionary Assemblies had solemnly proclaimed and of which it had assured the triumph more than once for other

people's benefit. By the voice of their learned men, historians and philosophers the French denounced the policy of conquest; they asserted a nation is not a thing, a herd, but a living being; they founded the unity of the modern state, not on compulsion but on the voluntary union of the citizens composing it. « Our principle », wrote Fustel de Coulanges to Mommsen, « is that a population can only be governed by the institutions it has freely accepted and ought not to belong to any State otherwise than by its will and free consent. This is the modern principle. It is nowadays the only foundation of order, and all who are well disposed towards peace and the partisans of human progress must rally it. »

Ernest Renan, brought up in the school of Germany, does not lower himself to insulting the masters — Kant, Fichte, Herder, Goethe, — who formed his mind, and whose earnestness and depth he never ceased admiring. He does not manufacture a philosophy of war, echoing back the passions of the crowd; he does not confuse the noble views of German thought with Prussian militarism; he keeps the reverence of himself and truth. A philosopher, he has the courage of thought, which has its cowardice too. He had always been very stern with the French democracy, with what he called its abstractions and idle fancies. But, like Fustel de Coulanges, he comes back to French tradition, instead of historical right serving to justify the policy of annexation and all the abuses of force, and he invokes the principles of the Revolution, which, causing moral law to take its place in history, marks a decisive progress in the human conscience.

The right of olden times is not the right of today. The feeling of nationality is not a hundred years old... A union of provinces was formerly nothing but a transfer of landed property from one prince to another; the people was most generally indifferent to it. We created this consciousness of nations by our Revolution we gave it to those we have fought against, often unjustly enough; *it is our dogma.*

Nearly everywhere where the fiery German patriots lay claim to Germanic right, we could lay claim to an older Celtic right, and before the Celtic period, there were, so people say, Allophytes, Fins and Laps. Before the Laps there were the cave-dwellers and before the cave-dwellers ourang-outangs. With this philosophy of history the only legal thing in the world would be the right of the ourang-outangs unjustly pushed out of place by the perfidy of civilised beings. The plain-dealing of might would be preferable to this hypocrisy of right. France does not admit the transfer of souls. The only right, is the right nations have of associating freely and only obeying a power they have consented to. A nation is not defined by race, language or religion; a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which, properly speaking are only one, make up this soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. One is the common possession of the same legacy of memories; the other is the present consent, the longing to live together, the wish to improve the inheritance we have received whole!

Present in French History, alive in the conscience of the nation, consecrated by the blood shed on battlefields, accepted and upheld by the historians and philosophers the most hostile to the Revolution, this doctrine is French truth, — the « dogma » we could only deny by infringing on the honour and spiritual integrity of the fatherland.

IV.

The annexation and the attitude of Europe.

1. THE SILENCE OR COMPLICITY OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

The governments, with the clear-sightedness that characterises them, accepted the lessening of France lightheartedly. The startling victories of Germany completely dazzled and intimidated them; not one rose up to protest against an annexation which was about to inaugurate the system of armed peace, and make the German overlordship weigh heavily on them all. The opinion of other nations was scarcely

less favourable to us. Powerless to conciliate order and liberty, torn in twain by the anarchy of the working class and the selfishness of the middle class, France had sought salvation in the lowest form of democracy, cæsarism. The brilliant, frivolous life of Paris, the display of corruption, the light opera and the vaudeville, all the evil, according to our custom, thrown into full light, hid the deepset virtues of the nation. Old jealousies and old spites found satisfaction in a defeat that a great many welcomed as a revenge.

The incoherent policy of Napoleon III, a strange mixture of generous whims and bonapartist tradition, had wearied the world. The war with Mexico, a regular challenge to reason, had set the United States against us. England followed the battle as a looker-on, thinking perhaps that the king of Prussia was working for her too, by weakening an old-time rival. After our first reverses the Emperor unknown to his ministers begged Gladstone, the great liberal minister, to offer Prussia the mediation of the United Kingdom; he refused to undertake a step which anyhow had no chance of success. Russia upheld the policy of Bismarck, who, at the Conference of Berlin, paid his debts with the money we all know. The Austrians had not forgotten Sadowa and their exclusion from the Germanic Confederation, but with the eye of Russia on them they hesitated and waited to see what was going to happen; after our misfortunes, the Count of Berst, a shallow-minded, narrow character, swore he had never entertained towards Prussia other than «the friendliest intentions». Victor-Emmanuel, a soldier and a gentleman, remembering that French and Italian blood had mingled together on the battlefields of the war of Independence, offered his help on condition of taking possession of Rome and achieving the unity of Italy by giving the country a capital which sums up its glories and symbolises its hopes.

But the Spanish Empress, fanatical and narrow-minded, who called the war against Germany « her war », whose evil influence stopped the retreat of Mac-Mahon towards Paris and brought about the disaster of Sedan, was not disposed to sacrificing to France all that remained of the Pope's temporal power. The fascination of victory and fright completed our isolation: everybody was silent when Thiers, as an unofficial diplomate, travelled through all the courts of Europe, humbly begging for an intervention, he only met with indifference, hostility and scornful pity; he came back convinced that no one would rise up on the road of destiny.

It was only the down-trodden peoples, that had the habit of looking up to France, that felt hurt and conquered by the defeat. The Tzecks, engaged in a hard struggle against the Germans of Austria, a minority in Bohemia that the victories of Prussia made still prouder and more unmanageable, dared to express their sympathies publicly. Sept. 8th 1870 the great Tzeck orator Rieger, speaking for the Slav members of the Diet, laid before the Chancellor of Austria a protestation against the proposed annexation of Alsace-Lorraine: « To take away a province from France, the inhabitants of which consider themselves and wish to remain French, would be a transgression against the right of nations of disposing freely of their own destiny and will be putting might in the place of right. The Tzech nation cannot help expressing its warmest sympathy with the noble French people, now defending the soil of their country; it does not forget the numberless services rendered to civilization, nor all the sacrifices made in the defence of the ideals of humanity and freedom. »

2. THE GERMAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY AGAINST THE ANNEXATION. — THE HEROIC STRUGGLE OF BEBEL AND LIEBKNECHT.

But, in the midst of the silence and abstention of governments and nations, it is from Germany itself that the strongest protestations against Bismarck's policy and the act of violence committed on France came. Our duty is not to forget it. The Socialist Party few a number, split up in Lassallians and Marxists, had only five members in the Parliament of North Germany. Small groupings, which form and uphold glowing ideals, ignore concessions, transactions, and the conflict of personal interest and duty, causing principles to waver. The army was stout-hearted and the chiefs brave. Without any possibility of changing the course of events, the Social-Democracy did all it could do: its duty.

August 19th 1870, when the Prussian government asked the Reichstag to vote the credits of war, Bebel and Liebknecht refused to vote, and amid hootings Liebknecht fearlessly explained the reasons of their attitude: — « Adversaries of all dynastic war, both as socialists and republicans, — members of the International which is fighting against all crushing down of nationalities, and is endeavouring to unite all the downtrodden in brotherly union, we cannot either directly or indirectly, have anything to do with the present war. »

After the capitulation of Sedan, the Empire fell under the load of its own errors, and without a street-fight, without bloodshed, the Republic was proclaimed Sept. 4th 1870. July 19th the Lassallians had voted the credits of war, considering that the Germans had been attacked and were fighting for their liberty. As soon as they heard of the fall of the Empire, all the socialists, both Lassallians and Marxists were of one mind and declared themselves against the continuation of the war which had « degenerated into an offensive war against the French

nation ». The managing committee with its seat at Brunswick sent out an appeal to the German work-
ingmen, which was published in the *Volkstaat*, the
organ of the party:

After having submitted for twenty years to the shameful
yoke of the Second Empire, the French nation has awaked
in an hour of fearful pain and has taken its direction in
its own hands.

Hurrah for the French Republic!

...Peace will be only possible inasmuch as the conditions
of it are perfectly honorable. It is the duty of the German
people, it is even in their interest to offer an honorable
peace to the French Republic. It is in the interest of Ger-
many because a shameful peace would only be a truce,
which would be broken when France with recovered strength
wipes off the insult received. It is the German working-
men, considering the French working-men as brothers,
who ought to demand this honorable peace with the French
Republic. The German working-class declares therefore,
they will not allow the French people to be insulted now
it has just got rid of the only man who upset the concord
between the two nations...

The only effect of the policy of annexation would be to
continue military despotism in our newbuilt Germany, and
to provoke in the future, the mutual murder of Germany
and France.

Anyone whom the tumult of the present moment has not
made giddy, or who has no interest in deceiving the German
nation, ought to understand that the necessary consequence
of the war of 1870 will be a war with Russia, just as today's
war is a consequence of the war of 1866. The attitude of
victorious Germany will decide of the perils this war holds
in store; if Germany means to keep Alsace-Lorraine she
will find France and Russia united against her...

We therefore protest against the annexation of Alsace and
Lorraine; we protest in the name of the German democratic
committee, certain all the German working-men, think as
we do. The German working-men, taking into considera-
tion the interests of France and Germany, the interests of
peace and liberty, the interests of civilization against Cos-
sack barbarism, will not suffer the annexation of Alsace and
Lorraine.

Those who signed this protestation did not ignore
what price they would pay for it. The general Vogel
von Falkenstein had the members of the managing
committee arrested and sent, loaded with fetters, to
a fortress on the Russian frontier, where they un-

Anti-Annex in Germ.

derwent five month's imprisonment before trial. Bebel and Liebknecht, free, continued the fight, in their paper and in Parliament. Oct. 24th 1870 Bismarck asked the Reichstag to vote new credits to go on with the war. « In the midst of the patriotic orgies » (1). Liebknecht and Bebel, setting the insults, threats and clenched fists at defiance, resumed and upheld the ideas of the public declaration, condemned the policy of annexation, pointing out with perspicacity the dangers and evils it was preparing for the future. The motion they laid down received the vote of the five socialist members that the Parliament of the Northern Confederation possessed.

A few days later, M. Albert Lefèvre, intrusted by Gambetta with a special mission in Austria, addressed a letter to the two leaders of the Social-Democracy, thanking and complimenting them on their splendid bravery. The beginning of this letter seems to give it an official character which we can not help being surprised at. By approving and appearing to have a common interest with them, the French Government was compromising men, already peculiarly exposed:

Dear Sirs,

In the name of the French Republic, the government of which has entrusted me with a special mission, I think it is my duty to thank you for the noble words you uttered in the midst of a Parliament, fanaticised by the spirit of conquest and the drunken fury of militarism. The courage you then gave proof of, has drawn on you the attention of the whole of Europe and has won you a glorious place among the champions of freedom... It is you, gentlemen, and your party, who, among this general falling-away, have upheld the great German tradition. In our eyes, you are the true representatives of a noble nation for which we should have wished to never have anything but brotherly feelings, and which we have never left off esteeming. The

(1) Bebel.

French nation greets you, gentlemen, and thanks you, seeing in you the future of Germany and the hope of a reconciliation between the two countries (1).

Over and above the lawful government, the French Republic seemed to be entering in direct relations with the democracy and its leaders. The hope of agitating Germany and creating a great movement of opinion among the people was built strangely on air. The only effect this letter could have, was to let loose nationalistic passions against the men to whom it was addressed. The German Government got to know about the letter, which was read publicly in the Reichstag by one of the members of the government, counsellor Wagner, amongst shouts of anger and indignation. The thoughtlessness and imprudence of a message handed over by an accredited diplomat to a democratic party treated as a state in the State, gave a hold to all sorts of insults and calumnies. The middle-class press began one of those campaigns of hatred and violence such as generosity generally inspires; it denounced Bebel and Liebknecht, accused them of dealings with the enemy and of high treason. Dec. 17th 1870 Bebel was arrested in his workshop and Liebknecht in the offices of the *Volkstat*. After three months' imprisonment before trial, both accused were freed provisionally. As a member of the Reichstag of the newly constituted Empire Bebel was courageous enough to protest once more against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine: « A fatal conquest, which would weigh heavily on all the Franco-German relations, lead France to an alliance with Russia, and oblige Ger-

(1) JEAN LONGUET: *Les Socialistes allemands et la Guerre*. The documents are borrowed from his interesting pamphlet. Author's note: Some discrepancies exist between our translation and the French text (p. 34 of the original pamphlet). They are owing to corrections the author has made, after discussion, of historical errors in M. Longuet's documents.

many to maintain greater and greater military forces. » Finally, March 27th 1872 after a trial which lasted nearly three weeks, Bebel and Liebknecht were condemned by the assize court, to two years' prison, which they underwent in the fortresses of Hubertusbourg and Königstein (1).

The General Committee of the International published in turn a manifesto drawn up by Karl Marx, who with admirable clear-sightedness pointed out to blinded Germany the abyss, whither necessarily the road was leading on which the drunken joy of victory had thrown her headlong. « History will measure the chastisement, not according to the number of square miles conquered from France, but according to the greatness of the crime which revived the policy of conquest during the second half of the XIX century. Do Teutonic patriots really think that if they throw France in the arms of Russia they will assure the liberty and peace of Germany? » And Karl Marx clearly pointed out the only alternatives open to the Germans, « either to become at all risks, the instrument of Russian extension, or else get ready for a defensive war, — and not one of those localised wars of modern invention, but really a race-war, between the Slavs and the allied Latin races. » Bismarck, his diplomats and military men, all the patented machinists of the periodical catastrophes of history, the leaders of nations, dupes of nothing but themselves, shrugged their shoulders, and looked down haughtily and afar on those prophets who could only foresee chastisement in a lucky crime. I have always had my suspicions that an ideologue, as Napoleon used scornfully to say, could be defined as a man who foresees Waterloo and St Helena in Austerlitz.

German policy has obeyed truly, the imperious logic of the facts it had down; it has balanced

(1) Jean Longuet.

between the terms of the alternatives left, — first friendly, then hostile and always suspicious towards Russia. The war Karl Marx announced is unmuzzled today, and in the very conditions he predicted. In 1914 the German Socialist Party, with its 4.500.000 electors and its 104 members of the Reichstag did not keep up the splendid tradition of the tiny majority which had struggled unremittingly in 1870. It lacked frankness, impulse, revolutionary daring, faith in its own ideals. It accepted all the fictions of its government and firstly that of defensive war; it voted the credits; it let pass, improtestingly, the violation of Belgian neutrality, the plunder, fire and murders of which Belgium was the innocent victim. Its number, which seemed to be its strength was the principal cause of its weakness. In all big parties there are weak, hesitating members, — ambitious ones too, only waiting for the opportunity of betraying it. The majority was servile, — the minority timid. The party submitted with resigned docility to what it felt incapable of preventing; but at least it was united, as in 1871 in condemning the policy of annexation, and one man, Liebknecht, alone against all, friends and enemies, faithful to his father's great example, showed once more that the rarest form of courage is civic courage.

V

The consequences of the treaty of Francfort.

1. THE TREATY OF FRANCFORT FATAL TO ALSACE : DISTRESSES OF THE ANNEXATION. — PROTESTATION AND RESISTANCE TO GERMANISATION.

It is a very remarkable thing that thieves are always moved by the purest of intentions. They hide treasures of patriotism, disinterestedness and knowledge of the real good of others, in their thievish

souls. The Treaty of Francfort was to create the joy of Alsace, by restoring it to its true destiny, was to give security to united Germany and assure definite peace to Europe. The Treaty of Francfort has been fatal to Alsace, fatal to Germany, fatal to Europe. There is, as it were, a justice of things, which cause the fruitfulness of evil.

Alsace knew all the griefs annexation brings with it. Up to Oct. 1st 1872, the Alsatian-Lorrains who wished to keep the French nationality, had a « right of choice ». A heavy, cruel right, which turned against those who took on themselves to use it. Any Alsatian who refused the glorious title of German citizen was obliged to go away, leave the country, resign himself to hopeless exile, and leave his home and the graves of his dead behind him. Lives were upturned and hearts broken. When you sacrifice all the part of you that belongs to others, — sympathy, esteem and confidence, to become just anywhere, a stranger, it really means dying, with the full consciousness of all such a death has robbed you of. Even duty showed itself as an uncertain, painful alternative. To go or to stay? To go so as not to accept the accomplished fact, so as not to submit to the yoke, — to go so as to put one's strength to the service of France, crippled but upright?—To stay, so as to protest, so as not to consent, so as to fight silently at one's post and keep the citadel till deliverance came? Above all the notion of putting on the uniform and the pointed helmet, of being a Prussian soldier in Prussian barracks, was unbearable. Families split up: the old people stayed behind, — the children went away; the eldest son remained to keep up the family tradition, to manage the business or the factory; the younger ones left, carrying away with them the dear memories of early childhood, to run the risks of a new existence; each of them at the farewell, thinking with terror that one day or another their sons might meet in the ranks as ene-

mies. Patient efforts lost, bonds of affection blighted, ruin and distress, the anguish of those who will not be able to be there at the hour of sickness and death, a thousand pains, living forever in thousands of hearts, — all such things can only be indifferent to deep-minded politicians who make up the happiness of nations with the unhappiness of their individual members.

The Germans declared bashfully it was not a conquest, — they were only coming into their own; they were enlarging the family circle and bringing back into it, children who had wandered from home two centuries ago, — it was the home-coming of the prodigal son! If the Alsatians are authentic Germans, logic expects them to enjoy the same rights as the Germans; since they are incorporated in the Empire, they form a confederate State with the same privileges as the inhabitants of Hesse, Baden and Bavaria. The arbitrary and dictatorial rule to which they are submitted shows up the lie and the contradiction. The annexation of Alsace is not a conquest, but Alsace is treated as a conquered country; the Alsatians are Germans, but they are treated as strangers and enemies. Without parliament, without law, without autonomy, without members in the federal Council, Alsace is neither a kingdom, a principality, nor a republic; it is « land of the Empire », — joint property; it belongs to everybody, except to itself.

The Alsatians submit to the yoke, but do not accept it. When they are called upon, in January 1874, to elect representatives, and can make their voices heard, they oppose right to might, and utter the same protestation at the Reichstag of Berlin as at the National Assembly of Bordeaux. The fifteen members elected, — protestants and catholics, among whom was the Bishop of Strasbourg and Metz, signed unanimously a proposition, demanding the annexed provinces to be consulted on their incorporation to the German Empire. Edouard Teutsch, member for

Saverne, spoke in the name of all, at the bar of the Reichstag: —

In the name of the Alsatian-Lorrains, sold by the Treaty of Francfort, we protest against the abuse of force of which our country is a victim... Reason, no less than the most elementary principles, proclaims that such a treaty cannot be valid. Citizens, having souls and minds, are not saleable goods, to be bought and sold, and therefore it is not permissible to make them the object of a bill of sale. Even admitting, — what we do not admit, that France had the right of giving us up, the contract you oppose to us is of no value. For a contract is only rendered valid by the consent of two parties. Now the French nation only signed our desertion with your sword at its throat: it was not free; it bent low under violence; our codes teach us violence renders null and void all conventions sullied by it. When our electors chose us, — each one of us, — they desired above to all to assert their sympathy for their French homeland and their right of being their own masters... It is the custom among you, alas! when any generously minded man raises his voice from time to time to defend the nations you oppress, to shut his mouth by brutally accusing him of treason. Gentlemen, do not let yourselves be terrified by this insult: *the traitors to their country are those who, by an insane policy, scorn right and justice, and lead their country to its ruin, and not the honest men who, impressed with an injustice wherever it comes from, are brave and frank enough to denounce it* (1).

These noble words were not listened to in silence, in the spirit of respectful sympathy generosity never refuses to misfortune: they were interrupted by sneers, hooted down, — with the low mean pose that everyone who tries to hide an iniquity under the show of right, is condemned to.

Monseigneur Raes, Bishop of Strasbourg, had signed the motion as well as all his colleagues; he had never, at any time, withdrawn his adhesion. When Teutsch came down from the bar, Monseigneur Raess, to the stupefaction of his colleagues whom nothing had warned of this treachery, rose up and uttered the following words:

(1) EDOUARD TEUTSCH: *Notes pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Annexion de l'Alsace-Lorraine.*

Gentlemen, to avoid any misunderstanding, *which might harm me and my co-religionaries*, I consider myself compelled by my conscience to declare what follows: The Alsatian-Lorrains of *my confession* (Teutsch was protestant), have in nowise the intention of questioning the Treaty of Francfort concluded between two great nations. This is what I desired to say, above all.

The priests, members for Alsace-Lorraine, wished to protest, but the Reichstag insisted on the close of the debate.

If the Germans had been loyal and generous and had taken the Alsatians into their confidence, if they had given them self-government, whilst they allowed them to participate in the material prosperity of the Empire, little by little hearts would have been soothed and hatred died out. Without disowning their faithful attachement to France, the nobleness of which the Germans ought to have felt, the Alsatians would have got used to their new situation; they would have taken up the role they played before the annexation, — bringing together two civilisations to which they belonged; they would perhaps have reconciled the two nations, the intellects of which they had the privilege of uniting. But the road of violence has no turning in it leading to justice and peace. This intelligent liberalism was hateful to the overbearing discipline of the Prussian State which had taken the upperhand in the German Empire. By a series of clumsy, rough measures the government did all it could to hinder the germanisation it wanted to hasten. Angry at its failure it blamed its victims for a misfortune of which it alone was guilty, and to remedy it made it worse. The province was well administered, — a series of public works well thought-out, roads, canals, and railroads, made it thrive. But material prosperity is not sufficient to console a nation for the constant wounds made to its private feelings. The stiffness of the German officials, the officers' pride, the immigrants' invasion, the perpetual « verboten », the teasing and vexations

of an underhand police-force, the changing of sign-boards and Christian names, the childish condemnation of customs recalling the past, even the clumsy, imperious marks of attention, made the Alsatians feel the yoke: Each time the Germans struck a blow at the Alsatians in the hope of hurting the French, they avowed the tie still uniting them to their old country. In 1895 a deputy could still say in open Reichstag: « You ought to give Alsace-Lorraine a flag on which would figure a straight jacket, crowned by the pointed helmet of a mounted policeman. »

Nevertheless years slipped by; a generation formed by the German schoolmaster, educated in the ignorance of France, had grown up. The character of the resistance had altered little by little, but it was not vanquished. The democratically minded Alsatian people with the ancient traditions of their free-towns and the memories of the French Revolution, hated Prussian constraint, causing public order to repose on barrack-room discipline. By contrast and by opposition the Alsatians, like all down-trodden peoples, looked back over their past, and took a keener and keener consciousness of the originality of their own culture, with its mixture of earnestness and humour, shrewdness and depth. They studied their history, collected their antiquities in a museum, watched over their dialect, customs, traditional festivals, and created a national theatre; they sought out in their past, their present, their longing for life, title-deeds to existence and freedom.

Bismarck, von Moltke, Treitschke, and so on, — statesmen, military men, historians, all those who write history with the blood of nations, had declared with one common accord that twenty years hence German soil would bless the day that gave it back to its mother-country. After forty years had gone by, the Constitution of 1911, lengthening the chain without breaking it and leaving all final decision to the

Emperor, was an avowal of impotency, the proof Alsace was not morally conquered. The struggle was going on under a new form, and in that struggle of which the future did not let one foresee the issue, Alsatian tenacity had some chances of conquering.

2. THE TREATY OF FRANCFORT FATAL TO GERMANY. —
GERMANY UNDER THE YOKE: PRUSSIAN MILITARISM.
INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL DECAY.

In spite of appearances, official speeches, commemorative ceremonies, columns, and all that dazzles the crowds, until the settling of accounts comes, the conquest was a misfortune for the conquering nation as much as for the conquered one, and a Russian sociologue, Novicow, has been able to write a book, which is confused and diffused but which contains very clear-sighted views, with the following title: «Alsace-Lorraine, an obstacle to German expansion.»

As a ransom of its conquest, the nation first made the sacrifice of its liberty. So as not to despair of a country to which he felt bound by intellectual gratitude he was too proud to deny, Ernest Renan wrote in 1870: «Prussia (I mean military and feudal Prussia), will be a conjuncture, not a permanent condition; what will really last is Germany. Germany given up to its own genius will be a liberal, peace-loving nation, — democratic even in the right sense.» The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, leaving at the western frontier France offended and threatening, compelled Germany to accept the over-rule of Prussia, which alone, by its centralised State, overbearing red-tapeism, and warlike tradition, could, breaking down every attempt at independence and separation, unify, organise and make a great military power of it. The Confederate States, became tributary States, for they had no representatives in foreign countries, no diplomacy, no private policy. Prussia had subordinated individual enterprise to national solidarity, binding economical forces to-

gether by compulsion, adapting to industrial society, in spite of theorists, the regular cooperation, the collective discipline, and the combined action of military society, and by its state socialism, had realised the prodigious prosperity that astounded the universe. The Germans had not, therefore, as some people think, sacrificed their home extension to the exclusive preparation of war; even in peace they had by discipline and hierarchy set up that common effort and concentration of their strength, which allowed them to suddenly convert industrial activity into military activity, economical offensive into war like offensive. Mobilization was, as it were, the perpetual state of the nation.

But this policy fell with a crushing weight on the people, which had sacrificed freedom to the necessity of being strong. Its first consequence was militarism; it exacted, together with the first army in the world, a fleet equal to England's. The national debt got bigger and bigger, taxes continued increasing. Work grew harder and harder, without raising the level of ordinary life. The voucher became enormous in this great undertaking. The army was not only the prop of the Empire, — it was its example and ideal. Living symbol of the great principle of national life, might, its chiefs were above the laws. Citizens in the barracks were brutalised and ill-treated, trained to passive obedience. The incident of Saverne showed the scorn military men had for civil power, and after a start of revolt, the nation became resigned.

Besides the two powers in this hierarchy, taking their root in imperial authority, each kept their own influence, limits and unity. The army was in the first rank, but it remained in its rank. Victor Hugo, in 1870, in his apocalyptic language had declared to the Parliament of Bordeaux: « The victorious nation will have blind obedience as a dogma; the sword becomes the sceptre, — speech is muzzled,

thought bound hand and foot, conscience on its knees, — no free tribune, no press, — nothing but darkness. » And truly, Germany had become one vast Prussia, in which organisation took the place of liberty; it became the model and envy of all the reactionary parties, which are still faithful to it and hope to see their own triumph in its victory. Popular uneasiness and discontent were expressed by the spread of socialism. But the socialist party remained isolated in the midst of the nation, having no bond with the upper and middle classes, no control of public affairs, and was held aloof as « an enemy of the State. » Moreover, the German Socialist party, having never struggled in the past with the middle-class for liberty, had no democratic and liberal traditions, so it modelled itself in the image of the State it was fighting against, and appeared as a hostile force but of the same category.

The German nation had become rich and powerful, but it had lost what really made it great, — the gift of thinking for others. Selfishness cuts off nations as it does individuals. Separating action from its higher ends, it could not help making a divinity of might, to which it had sacrificed everything. « One of the first consequences of the Treaty of Francfort », writes Novicow, « was to give rise, in Germany, to an unlimited faith in brute force. On the one hand they fancied brute force can and must do everything: — On the other, that they will always possess it and that other nations never will. » German leaders, certain that by divine right, victory was theirs till time be o'er, and determined to profit by this privilege by making themselves comfortable on this earth, considered every international, judicial institution as an injury to their right of conquest (1).

(1) As I have never left off telling my French friends that Germans entertain the most peaceful feelings towards them, so I must give a similar assurance to the Germans, for such is the perfect truth. Both French and German.

In 1899 at the first meeting of the Hague, the Count of Münster declared it to be « the most abominable political trick ever used up to now ». The only object it had was to make the Germans lose the advantage their rapid mobilization gave them over France and Russia. Expressing the Emperor's opinion, the German delegate said: « The institution of an international tribunal is irreconcilable with the sovereignty of a monarch. A sovereign, by the grace of God, cannot think one single instant of stripping off such an essential part of sovereignty, — that is the right of directing his people in critical moments. » Nevertheless the institution of police and magistrates was made against the right, house-breakers held of God of laying hand on other men's goods when they were strong enough, and could do it with impunity. All attempt at organising international relations juridically first came into collision with the resistance of Germany; they refused to discuss the limitation of armaments, under the pretext « that armaments belong to the home-department » for which a State is accountable to no one; in 1891 they made obligatory arbitration a failure and in 1907 universal arbitration.

By condemning nations to live in continual anxiety, under the threat of an empire which recognised no other limit to its right but its might, and considered its might limitless, they estranged minds and hearts more and more. During the XIX century, the German people had been the governess of the world; by its philosophers, poets and musicians it had exercised an over-rule without violence. Its genius was rapidly lowered to the level of its new thoughts and ambi-

are peace-loving, but they mutually suspect each other, because the two nations are led away in the same manner by stupid and criminal writers and politicians. Anyone who describes one of the two nations to the other as wishing for war, is the dangerous enemy of his country and really ought to be arrested for high treason. (IGNOTISSIMUS: *Une Voix d'Alsace*, in French and German, A. Colin, 1896).

tions. Certainly it still showed off well enough in society; it had conscientious scholars, who continued the critical work of their glorious forerunners, and learned men, uniting its laboratories to its factories; it provided professors for foreign universities; it remained the most learned nation of Europe, but when it was left to itself, without originality or great inspiration, it had lost the privilege of high thinking, opening new horizons on life and the world at large. It was no longer the time when great intellects of all nations turned towards Germany for the food of their spiritual life. When it left off being human it left off speaking to the whole of humanity. Without optimism and hope, all it kept of its idealistic tradition was sophism, which divinised its attributes and appetites. People even began to distrust doctrines which authorised such consequences. Rather than the works of the poets, they translated, as a dishonour to the country, the generals' books, with their theory of terrorism and devastation. Thus everyone drew back from the Germans; the fear they inspired alone modified the expression of antipathy and hatred they felt weighing on them. They were surprised and indignant at not finding in victory the perfect security they expected. Like Dives they accused the jealousy of lazy, ill-natured neighbours. Proud of their work and prosperity, sure of their strength, they ended by thinking they were superior to everybody, chosen by God for domination, and with a powerful minority, holding important social influence, this crossed ambition and uneasy pride became pangermanism, a desire of unlimited conquest and definite victory, assuring quiet enjoyment of it.

3 THE TREATY OF FRANCFORT DISASTROUS TO EUROPE : ARMED PEACE

A misfortune for the conquered provinces, causing Germany itself to slide lower and backwards, the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine had no less sad conse-

quences for Europe. « If Germany », writes Novicow, « had adopted the principle of the liberty of nations and the policy of plebiscite as basis of the peace-treaty with France, all the direction of European policy would have completely changed, and Europe would have quickly taken the road to union. » The right of peoples being held sacred, it would have taken the place of the right of conquest, at least in the relations of civilized nations to each other. The first principle of an international juridical order was laid down. Prussian statesmen have decided otherwise. Might is accountable to no one, — it is divine like floods and thunder. Justice is only the hypocrisy of the weak; the right of a nation is measured by what it is capable of defending. Only believing in might and expecting to be the only holder of it, Germany multiplies soldiers, guns and war-ships. So threatened, other nations must follow in the race to the abyss. The budgets of war in all the States swelled out immoderately, and armed peace weighed as heavily on everybody as on Germany: it is thus that armaments belong purely to the home-department! Prussian militarism became a sort of model everyone was obliged to imitate, whether they liked it or not. Europe was obliged to live half a century in this nightmare.

At the same time the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine strained all European policy. The wisest and most farseeing minds had dreamed of an alliance between France, Germany and England, « the effect of which would have been to lead the world in the road of liberal civilization » (Renan), and to give a direction to Russia whilst keeping in its place. This alliance « of which the rupture puts progress in mourning » was no longer possible on account of the blindness of the statesmen who made irreconcilable enemies of France and Germany. Henceforward a union that great, short-sighted politicians thought they had prevented for ever, because they had

warded it off for a time, became certain, — the union of France and Russia. There had been warnings in plenty while it was still time to give them, but they were covered up by the wild joy of victory. Karl Marx had pointed out that the danger was the same for Prussia to be for, or against Russian expansion; with no less strength and penetration Ernest Renan, in his letter to David Strauss mentioned the Slav nations, young, ardent, the strength of the future taking revenge one day on Germany of the lessons they had received from it. « Your papers do not see a mountain before their eyes, — the growing opposition of the Slav conscience and the Germanic conscience, — opposition that will end in a fearful struggle. » ...The Germans have acted towards the French as if they never expected to have any other enemy. Now the precept of the old sage: *ama tanquam osurus*, ought to be reversed nowadays; you must hate as if you were going to be the ally of the one you hate; you never know whose friendship you may be glad of one day or another. » The Franco-Russian alliance was in the logic of facts, and was decided upon when its time came.

Carried away by their own impetus, needing sure outlets for their ultra-production, the Germans entered resolutely into what Herr von Bulow called world-policy (*Weltpolitik*). They found open markets, but they wanted markets that could never be closed to them. They complained of not having a « sunny spot » of their own; they wanted a colonial empire equal to their economical and military situation. To other people's rights they opposed the right that their possibility of taking what they wanted and of organising all they took, gave them. The emperor declared in a formula that became a pass-word « our future is on the water. » He asked his people for new sacrifices; every year he enlarged his naval programme, — men o' war, cruisers, torpedo-boats, submarines, — hastening on towards the day he

could dispute the mastery of the seas. Condemned by their situation to keeping the Ocean open to their ships under pain of literally dying of hunger, the English were alarmed, but peace-loving and made wise by their long history they proposed a mutual limitation of armaments which would leave their navy the superiority their situation compelled them to uphold. The conditions German diplomacy laid down did not allow the negotiations to come to anything. Germany had made itself an enemy of England as it had of France. The Triple Alliance was concluded, — the great powers were divided in two hostile groups, — each of which affirmed its desire of peace and continued preparing war. Insolent writers whose foul-mouthed jawing covered up the timid protestations of sensible folk succeeded in irritating German pride and the useasiness of the threatened nations. Europe was given up, more and more to mischief makers, racketters and seekers of adventure, who in three weeks' time get round Paris, Berlin and Moscow, leading nations light-heartedly to their ruin. The Germans knew they were surrounded by enemies, and certain of their strength, were on the look-out for the best time for breaking through the circle traced round them. Reman had predicted to them that they had condemned themselves to having recourse to that: « excess is evil; pride is the only vice punished in this world... Every nation exercising over-rule so prepares its ruin, by bringing the coalition of the others against it. » The German nation has taken the initiative of a preventive war and will carry the responsibility of it. But the war was not an accident; its distant causes, which are its real and determining ones, are, together with the Treaty of Francfort, the policy of ruse and violence from which Europe has been unable to free itself. Incapable of rising to the idea of a continental policy and of understanding the imperious necessity of it; taking pleasure in the rivalities and divisions which

lead to impotency and common destruction, its statesmen, acting against the deepset instinct of the nations have all been of one mind in following the road leading to war. Through their fault and blindness Europe will only take consciousness of itself in time to verify how low it has fallen in comparison with the great American and Asiatic corporations which are getting rich by selling it means of suicide.

VI

Conclusion.

1. MIGHT DOES NOT MAKE RIGHT : ALSACE-LORRAINE HAS NEVER LEFT OFF BEING FRENCH

Fatal to those who enforced it as to those on whom it was enforced, fatal to Europe and the world, the treaty of Francfort is now torn up. After more than a year's warfare the Germans can still say they are victorious; they occupy Belgium and the north of France, Poland and Courland, they are thrusting back the Russian armies, but they are wearing themselves out in an effort they renew constantly without it ever coming to anything. In turn they will know what the right of the strongest is, or better still, they will learn that might is not enough to create right. « As soon as it is might that makes right », says J.-J. Rousseau, « the effect changes with the cause: all might which gets the better of the first might succeeds to its right. Since the strongest is always right, you only have to act so as to be always the strongest. Now, what is a right that disappears when might ceases? The name of « right » adds nothing to might: it means nothing at all. » There is no bridge between might and right, because they are not of the same category.

Not more to day than yesterday do we profess the German doctrine, — we mean to be faithful to our-

selves and keep the sense and reverence of right in the possession and use of might. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine will not be a conquest, but a reversion to juridical and legal right. In all security of conscience and without falling short of her principles, France victorious could turn against her adversaries the proposition they so stubbornly opposed to her: the Alsace-Lorraine question does not exist. The day the French nation recalls the lost provinces in the fold of the mother-country the question will not exist, because it will have received a solution consistent with justice and the right of nations.

But after half-a-century, circumstances have changed, feelings altered, economic life evolved, bringing with it new interests and new needs, — would it not therefore be more consistent with equity to consult the populations and put their fate in their own hands? German socialists opposed to all policy of annexing, do not fail reproaching French socialists with their adhesion to the pure and simple recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, as a relaxing of their principles. The argument is only valid if we admit that might can change a condition of right, by creating a new right. Admitting the plebiscite, would be recognising the right of conquest, agreeing that time suffices for making it valid; it would mean admitting the legitimacy of robbery by consentment to the effects of it, and justifying persecution by accepting its results and consequences.

The practical difficulties which would rise up against a plebiscitary consultation all come from the act of violence, which belongs to the principle of conquest and only allow the annulling of it (1). Who would be the citizens called upon to give their opinion and decide by their vote of the fate of the provinces? In 1871, by a brutal measure the Germans

See: *Almanach de la Paix par le Droit*, 1915. MAXIME LEROY: *La France devra-t-elle faire ratifier par un plébiscite la conquête de l'Alsace-Lorraine?*

compelled thousands of Alsatians to leave their country without hope of return; two hundred thousand, perhaps two hundred and fifty thousand left their homes and property. Has their faithful attachment to their French fatherland made them and their descendants lose all right of interfering at the time when the union to which they sacrificed everything becomes possible? On the other hand, is it possible to call up four or five hundred thousand immigrants, foreign colonists, germanising agents with no moral bond with Alsace, to sanction the conquest and their own domination?

Plebiscite would mean the recognition of the state of fact brought about by conquest and that is a sufficient reason for us to thrust it aside. We do not admit the right of war. There is no Alsace-Lorraine question for us, because never at any time did Alsace-Lorraine confess itself German nor give its consent to the annexation. The character of the protestation has changed, because it has been obliged to adapt itself to new conditions, but it has never left off making itself heard. There is no Alsace-Lorraine question, because the covenant binding these provinces to the German Empire was unsound from the first and remains null and void ever since. The words uttered by the members at the Parliament of Bordeaux, and re-uttered by Edouard Teutsch at the Reichstag of Berlin, solve the question: « We take our fellow-citizens of France, the governments and nations of the whole world to witness, that we consider beforehand as null and void any acts, treaties, votes or plebiscite which would agree to giving up in favour of a foreigner, the whole or a part of our provinces of Alsace-Lorraine. »

Alsace-Lorraine becomes French, because it has never been anything else.

2. ALL ANNEXATION WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE REPUBLIC, THE INTERETS AND HONOUR OF FRANCE.

The act of reparation is not sufficient for some people; they want to go farther still and crave the honour of committing an injustice too. There are still a few conventionnels wandering about in our little republic who reconquer the left bank of the Rhine out of faithfulness to revolutionary tradition. When the allies broke through the frontier, the Convention contented itself with saying: « The French nation cannot conclude a peace-treaty with an enemy occupying its territory. » The argument of authority is a theologian's argument, referring to a sacred text. The Convention is dear to us because when threatened from without by the foreigner, betrayed from within by the fomenters of civil war, in a sudden spurt of energy it raised up the nation, organised defense and saved the country. This is what we must remember and imitate, but its mistakes do not become examples for all that. We do not seek in the Terror an argument for making the guillotine and political murder the complement of parliamentary rule. We have seen what the principles of the Convention are as far as annexation is concerned, and that it gave its form to the new right and the example of its first applications to international relations. If it was right when it laid down the principle, it was wrong when it transgressed against it. By giving its doctrine the lie it prepared the military dictatorship of Bonaparte and had its part in the responsibility of the fifteen years napoleonic wars, which blood-drained and wasted France, with the result we know: — two invasions and the frontiers of 1789.

We too have our « Germanisers », our etymology seekers who under a German inflexion hunt out a Celtic root, and, fools as they are, flatter themselves

they have founded a right on this dead man's science. Never have the French savants been more justly reproached with slavishly following the German school, not borrowing from it human methods leading to truth, but national passions leading away from it. With less strength and talent, because the thought of it is not so clear and well defined, but shameful as it were; it is in the same category, in the same terms, the same arguments Treitschke unfolded in 1870 to justify the violence done to Alsace-Lorraine: the aggressive tradition of Germany « of which the nails and teeth must be torn out », insecurity of the frontier, the necessity of assuring forever the peace of Europe, affinities that the people to whom one attributes them do not feel at all, the praise of the populations you intend to make slaves of, your generous and disinterested desire of making them happy whether they will or not, by bringing them the benefits of a higher civilisation to which they aspire without knowing it. Only to tell the truth which we do not suppress by keeping it low, France is only strong and invincible when faithful to her principles. The German argument is favourable to Germany. Treitschke can say the Alsatian dialect is a Germanic one and for a thousand years Alsace was mingled with the life of the Holy Roman Empire; our « Germanisers » cannot contest the Rhine Provinces speak German, and they are reduced to recalling that for a little less than twenty years they were administered by Napoleon's officials. Then why do not they annex Saxe under pretext Leibniz wrote his « Théodicée » in French? It is a strange perversion of taste, just when you are crying down the hideousness of pangermanist Germany to model yourself at its image and likeness.

The French nation therefore is not free; it has forbidden itself the right of conquest by the very violence with which it has never ceased blasting it. It alone cannot forget what the whole world re-

members. When Prussia stole Alsace-Lorraine it was faithful to its tradition, to its idea of the State and its doctrine of might. The French could not suddenly disown, without lessening themselves, the generous ideal identified with their existence in other nations' opinions. We cannot allow our appeal to justice to have only been the cowardice of the conquered, the hypocritical humility of the weak who waits whinnigly for the time to come to commit just the same crime he himself was a victim of. The protestation which rang out from the French bar, which remains written down in the works of our most illustrious thinkers, which came from everyone's heart, must not be the litany of a beggar who is hiding a mutton bone under his rags.

We must not let others disfigure the thing that makes the beauty of our French home-land, and sometimes its unexpected strength in time of trial. Since the Revolution the French fatherland has not been founded on the unity and continuity of a national dynasty; it is not reduced to a State unity maintaining hostile populations under the same law; it is the sovereign nation, the free union of citizens, the ideal and love in which they are reconciled. France includes different regions, of which each has its originality, temperament and character, but all of which by their own virtues only vary the aspects and expressions of the national genius. The bitterness of its political struggles can partly be explained by the feeling of perfect understanding about the essential, which no one thinks of questioning. Let but the stranger threaten and all the parties rally round the flag to defend their common inheritance. Between the French mother-country and conquering imperialism there is a real incompatibility, because there is no place in France for enslaved nations which do not consent to the free covenant by which the country is formed.

With millions of Germans incorporated by force,

and held under by brutal tyranny the French nation would not recognise itself. The principle of its national unity would be changed, carried from within to without, from freedom to coercion. A place would be made in it for the spirit of separatism and secession. I add that if the Republic transgressed against the right of nations, it would be disowning the rights of man, and working at its own destruction: doubtless its evil counsellors do not ignore that. We do not want a new Europe with France taking up the rôle of Germany. It is more than an Alsace-Lorraine, it is a Poland they want us to bind to our flanks. You do not serve your country by dishonouring it. I refuse to imagine the speech Edouard Teutsch uttered in 1874 at the Reichstag of Berlin, reproduced word for word, without changing anything in it, by some protesting deputy, covered up by the hooting and sneers of all the members of the French Parliament.

All the powers, allied together to prevent German over-rule were of one mind in saying their object was to break down Prussian militarism, or more justly still, to destroy the militarism to which Prussia had condemned Europe. Destroying Prussian militarism does not mean displacing it, — putting the centre of it at Paris or Moscow. The nations are shedding their blood like water to be delivered from armed peace, from the race to armaments which is ruining them and from the anguish stifling them. If the causes producing the evil in the past are upheld, they could but reproduce it in the future. Injustice is only supported by violence. « Military victory alone », writes justly Normann Angell, « will not be sufficient to create that better and more lasting Europe, the hope of which justifies this war. Such a result does not depend only on the defeat, of Germany, — it depends on the kind of peace and settling-up that will follow the defeat, on the energy with which we shall insist on the future building

being raised up according to just principles, on the watchfulness with which we shall avoid in our policy and conduct the mistakes and backslidings of our enemies. If we neglect this half of our task, the other half, — I mean the war itself with all its suffering and uncountable sacrifices, — will be fruitless and will make more and more distant the realisation of the noble ideals and splendid ends which sanctify it in our people's mind (1). »

The annexation of the left bank of the Rhine would cause uneasiness to England, threaten Belgium, forever sacred to us, and awake the suspicions of Holland, by bringing politics logically back to the policy of natural frontiers. To fight against their new subjects and crush down their longing for secession the French would be condemned to a dictator's rule, to measures of repression and laws of exception which would turn against themselves by changing the spirit of their national institutions. A liberal nation cannot set up, unpunished, an Austrian sort of police-force: ours is sufficient for us. To keep the populations under the yoke and delay the revenge of Prussia, we should be obliged to make heavier and heavier the militarism from which the war was to free us, and more and more like Germany sacrifice freedom to the necessity of being strong. Democracy would ruin itself by putting itself in conditions contrary to the principles of its existence and the laws of its development.

Our soldiers said: « We are going to make war on war; we offer ourselves in sacrifice to assure our children the blessing of definite peace. » We have pledged ourselves to our dead. Peace will not come out of the dealings and doings which always brought about war and its disasters in the past. The doctrine of might has gone bankrupt. For reconstruct-

(1) NORMAN ANGELL: *Cette guerre mettra-t-elle fin au militarisme prussien?*

ing Europe and setting up a lasting peace there, in the future, the congress will not set out, as that of Vienna in 1815 did, from the principle of legitimacy; it will set out from the principle that took its place a century ago: — the right of nations of disposing of themselves. It will not seek an impossible balance between rival ambitions, — it will seek out stability in justice; it will not confide peace to the moderation of kings, but to the wisdom of freed peoples. In the East, the entangled interests, the mixture of ethnical groups, the old time hatreds and rivalities will not allow us to resolve the problem to everybody's satisfaction. But the longing for justice, if it be sincere, will give a new direction to international politics. The idea of a juridical regulation, extended from individual to international relations, will have become history. The nation will no longer be an artificial grouping, taking its unity in the absolute sovereignty of a prince whose glory it is to increase his privilege by violence; it will be, as far as that is possible, a natural whole, or better still, a personality able to pass bonds with others, according to the law of mutual reverence. « We shall see the end of war », wrote Ernest Renan, « when we join to the principle of nationalities, the principle righting it, — that of European federation, superior to all nationalities... Force, capable of upholding a decision considered useful and salutary to the whole European family against the most powerful of its States, will reside solely in the power of intervention, mediation and alliance of the different States. Let us hope that this power, taking more and more concrete and regular forms, will bring about in the future a real congress, periodical if not permanent, and will be the heart of the United States of Europe, bound together in a federal covenant. » The union of the allied powers against pangermanist over-rule is a first example of this collective repression of an Empire, which had become a threat and a danger

for all. By the thousands of millions it is wasting, the riches it is destroying, the human lives it is wiping out, this war will be a lesson and an experience. War « does'n't pay ». If the European nations do not intend to complete their ruin, they must understand they have common interests, the first of which is to group themselves, for the time is over for them, with the great continental groupings already organised and threatening them, to render themselves impotent by their divisions and intestine struggles.

3. THE REASONS OF THE WAR AND THE ENGAGEMENTS TAKEN BY THE ALLIED POWERS

All the statesmen who have spoken since the beginning of the war in the name of the allied powers, have attested that this war was not only a struggle for the liberty of nations and the respect due to nationalities, but also an effort towards definite peace. These words only appeared fit for stirring up the enthusiasm of the crowds and fortifying their will of sacrifice, because they gave expression to their feelings and prayers. If they are forgotten by those who uttered them, they will be remembered by those who heard and treasured them. Russia, the foremost, has taken engagements: hardly had the Great Duke Nicolas entered into Galicia at the head of his armies, than, before God and men, he disavowed the criminal dismemberment of 1772, promised Poland, reconstituted under the Czar's suzerainty, together with self-government, the free use of its language and religion. The plunder, fire and murder of the martyred nation have sealed this solemn engagement. On Sept. 11th 1914, Winston Churchill said: « We want this war to remodel the map of Europe according to the principle of nationalities and the real wish of the peoples living in the

contested territories. After so much bloodshed we wish for a peace which will free races and restore the integrity of nations... Let us have done with armaments, the fear of strain, intrigues and the perpetual threat of the horrible present crisis. Let us make the regulation of European conflicts, just and natural. » To the question: « why are we fighting to day? » Sir Edward Grey answers: « We wish the nations of Europe to be free to live their independent life, and to follow their national development under their own governments in perfect liberty, whether they be great states or small. We crave for ourselves, and our allies crave for themselves, what we wish to secure for Europe, — the right of each nation to a supreme, independent life, to a national existence, not in the shadow of Prussian supremacy and over-rule, but in the full light of uniform liberty. » The French Republic, of one mind with the allies, proclaims through its most authorised representatives that this war is a war of deliverance. « France », said the President of the Council, « will not lay down arms before having shattered Prussian militarism, so as to be able to rebuild on a basis of justice, Europe, regenerate at last »; and the President of the Chamber continued: « The French are not only defending their soil, their homes, the tombs of their ancestors, their sacred memories, their ideal works of art and faith and all the graceful, just and beautiful things their genius has lavished forth: they are defending too: the respect of treaties, the independence of Europe and human freedom. We want to know if all the effort of conscience during centuries, will lead to its slavery, *if millions of men are to be taken, given up, herded at the other side of a frontier and condemned to fighting for their conquerors and masters against their country, their family, and their brothers...* The world wishes to live at last, Europe to breathe and the nations mean to dispose freely of themselves. »

These engagements will be kept, the nations have taken act of them. The treaties will be concluded under the supervision of the nations that know what price you pay for the mysteries of diplomacy. The victory of Germany would be the triumph of the policy of annexation, the consecration of international anarchy; its defeat can only be the negation of that policy of conquest and over-rule that has allied all the civilised nations against it. Those who follow the Germans, taking up their theories and formulas, extolling the right of might, become, as it were, their allies, and can only be dragged down in their fall. I am convinced that when the time comes for going from words to action, we shall find the French unanimity on the side of right. Some of them will only have to gather in the echo of their own words, which has not yet faded away, — others will only have to re-read their own works which are not forgotten yet. Our novellists have given us quite a literature on the painful, thwarted existences to which annexed populations are fatally condemned. M. Maurice Barrès who wishes to be nothing but a man of letters, has not forgotten the psychological studies he took so much pleasure in; no one better than he, has guessed, seized on and rivetted in all their shades, the mortifications, anxieties, uneasiness and secret anguish the foreigner's rule mingles with the most trivial incidents of daily life; no one, as well as he, has detected the contrast, the misunderstanding and the unreasoned hostility, which constantly awake the feeling of it: such delicate sympathy does not leave place for the coarse courage of lowering oneself to the part of a torturer. The friends of Paul Déroulède, those who knew him will not let his « Testament » be torn up, and still less will they tear it up with their own hands, for in it he left the expression of his last will and his highest hopes:

Lorsque nous aurons fait la guerre triomphante
Et que notre Patrie aura repris son rang,
Alors, avec les maux que la conquête enfante,
Disparaîtra l'horreur qui suit le conquérant.

Alors la grande France, aimante et sans rancune,
Semant ses jeunes blés sous ses lauriers nouveaux,
Fêtera le Travail, père de la Fortune,
Et chantera la Paix, mère des longs travaux.

Et ce sera la Paix calme, sereine, auguste,
Qui désarme les bras sans armer les esprits :
Car nous nous montrerons des vainqueurs au cœur juste.
Et nous ne reprendrons que ce qui nous fut pris.

Et notre nation, lasse de funérailles,
En exaltant ses morts, calmera ses vivants ;
Et nous ne voudrons plus qu'on parle de batailles
Et nous désapprendrons la haine à nos enfants (1).

Gabriel SÉAILLES.

(1) PAUL DÉROULÈDE : *Refrains militaires* (Testament).

When our war victorious is o'er,
And our country has won back its rank,
Then with the evils war brings in its train
Will disappear the hatred the conqueror trails.

Then our great France, full of love without spite
Sowing fresh-springing corn neath her new-born laurels,
Will welcome Work, father of Fortune,
And sing Peace, mother of lengthy deeds.

Then will come Peace, calm, serene and awful
Crushing down arms, but upholding intellect ;
For we shall stand out as just-hearted conquerors,
Only taking back what was robbed from us.

And our nation, weary of mournings,
Will soothe the living while praising the dead.
And nevermore will we hear, the name of battle,
And our children shall learn to unlearn hate.

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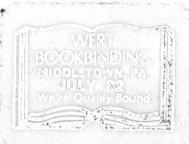
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